

Message Text

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WH HOUSE FOR BRZEZINSKI

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, IS

SUBJECT: HABIB/DINITZ CONVERSATION NOVEMBER 10

1. AMBASSADOR DINITZ, ACCOMPANIED BY MINISTER BAR-ON,
CALLED ON HABIB NOVEMBER 10 AT LATTER'S REQUEST TO BE
BROUGHT UP TO DATE ON WHERE OUR PRESENT NEGOTIATING EFFORTS
STAND.

2. HABIB BEGAN BY SAYING THAT WE HAD NOT BEEN BRIEFING THE
ISRAELIS ON EVERY TO-AND-FRO OF OUR EXCHANGES WITH THE
ARABS, PARTLY BECAUSE SOME OF THIS WAS OF LITTLE SIGNIFI-
CANCE, BUT IN SOME CASES BECAUSE WE DID NOT WANT TO EXPOSE
CONFIDENCES THAT THE ARABS HAD GIVEN US TO RISK OF PUBLIC
LEAKS IN ISRAEL. HE ASSURED DINITZ, HOWEVER, THAT WE WERE
KEEPING ISRAELIS INFORMED OF EVERYTHING OF REAL SIGNIFI-
CANCE THAT WAS GOING ON. HABIB EMPHASIZED THAT IN

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BRINGING THEM UP TO DATE TODAY, WE WANTED TO EMPHASIZE NEED
TO HOLD THIS INFORMATION VERY CLOSELY. WE DID NOT WANT TO
BE READING ABOUT IT IN A FEW DAYS TIME IN THE ISRAELI PRESS.
DINITZ NOTED THERE HAD BEEN SOME UNFORTUNATE LEAKS IN PAST,
BUT THAT MOST RECENT BRIEFINGS WE HAD GIVEN ISRAELIS HAD
BEEN KEPT VERY TIGHTLY AND HAD NOT APPEARED IN PRESS.

3. HABIB THEN MADE PRESENTATION COVERING SAME GROUND AS

IN GUIDANCE TRANSMITTED STATE 268910. SUMMING UP, HE SAID WE ARE STILL AWAITING ARAB RESPONSE ON QUESTION OF WHETHER WE CAN PROCEED TO GENEVA ON BASIS OF PROCEDURES DISCUSSED AND AGREED TO IN WORKING PAPER. HABIB THOUGHT THAT AS FAR AS THE EGYPTIANS AND JORDANIANS WERE CONCERNED THAT THEY WERE WILLING TO DEAL WITH THE AMBIGUITIES IN THE SITUATION BUT SYRIA STILL NEEDS TO BE PERSUADED. HE MENTIONED OUR INFORMATION THAT SADAT MAY BE GOING TO DAMASCUS SHORTLY AND THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME TALK AMONG ARABS OF MINI-SUMMIT OF CONFRONTATION STATES, BUT SADAT APPEARED TO BE UNENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THAT PROPOSAL. QUESTION WHICH WE WERE AWAITING ANSWER TO WAS WHETHER ARABS FELT THEY COULD PROCEED ON BASIS OF AGREEMENT ON PROCEDURES ALREADY ACHIEVED OR WHETHER THEY FELT SOMETHING MORE WAS REQUIRED. THIS WAS WHAT THEY WERE PRESENTLY TRYING TO DECIDE AMONG THEMSELVES.

4. HABIB STRESSED THAT AS FAR AS THE U.S. AND ISRAEL IS CONCERNED, TERMS OF WORKING PAPER STILL STAND, AND WE HAVE USED THESE AS BASIS FOR ALL OF OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH ARABS. THIS WAS TRUE OF QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION AND ALSO OF ORGANIZATION OF CONFERENCE INTO WORKING GROUPS. HABIB NOTED THAT U.S. AND ISRAEL APPARENTLY HAD DIFFERENCES ABOUT ROLE OF PLENARY BUT HABIB COULD NOT BELIEVE THAT
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THIS WOULD PROVE TO BE MAJOR OBSTACLE TO RECONVENING OF CONFERENCE. THIS WAS WHY WE HAD PROPOSED, AS EASIEST ROUTE, THAT CONFERENCE BE RECONVENED ON BASIS OF 1973 PROCEDURES. SADAT OBVIOUSLY WISHED TO PROCEED IN BILATERAL MANNER, BUT HE HAS TO COORDINATE WITH SYRIA, WHICH CONTINUES TO SEE PLENARY AS HAVING A DEFINITE ROLE.

5. HABIB CLOSED PRESENTATION WITH WORD ABOUT OUR CONTACTS WITH SOVIETS. OUR CONTACTS WITH THEM HAD NOT BEEN INTENSIVE SINCE NEW YORK BUT SECRETARY HAD TALKED TO DOBRYNIN TO URGE SOVIETS TO USE THEIR INFLUENCE WITH SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS TO MAINTAIN FLEXIBILITY. WE CONTINUE TO BE REALISTIC ABOUT SOVIETS AND COULD NOT PREDICT WHAT THEY MIGHT OR MIGHT NOT DO WITH PARTIES, BUT IT WAS DEFINITELY OUR IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD LIKE TO SEE GENEVA RECONVENED.

6. DINITZ THANKED HABIB FOR BRIEFING. HE SAID ISRAEL WAS NOT ADDICTED TO PROTOCOLAIRE APPROACH BUT IN THIS PROBLEM OF RECONVENING GENEVA CONFERENCE ISRAEL COULD NOT SEPARATE PROCEDURE FROM SUBSTANCE. IN THIS RESPECT SADAT HAD OVERSIMPLIFIED PROBLEM IN HIS SPEECH TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PREVIOUS EVENING. DINITZ SAID ISRAEL SAW THREE MAJOR ISSUES IN QUESTION OF PROCEDURE.

7. FIRST WAS ISSUE OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION. HE WAS HAPPY TO HEAR HABIB'S CONFIRMATION THAT U.S. IN ITS DISCUSSIONS WITH ARABS WAS HOLDING TO UNDERSTANDING WE HAD WITH ISRAEL ON THIS POINT. QUESTION HABIB HAD NOT ANSWERED, HOWEVER, WAS WHETHER ARABS AGREED WITH THIS POSITION. HABIB SAID WE JUST DON'T KNOW AT THIS POINT. WE HAVE YET TO HEAR SYRIAN RESPONSE.

8. SECOND POINT, CONTINUED DINITZ, WAS STRUCTURE OF CONFERENCE. AGAIN ISRAEL FELT THIS WAS NOT MERELY PROCEDURAL QUESTION, BUT WENT DEEP INTO QUESTION OF WHETHER
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ISRAEL FELT IT COULD REASONABLY PURSUE ITS OBJECTIVES IN SUBSTANTIVE NEGOTIATIONS. HE REVIEWED UNDERSTANDING U.S. AND ISRAEL HAD REACHED IN WORKING PAPER. HABIB SAID THIS WAS WHAT WE WERE STILL TALKING ABOUT WITH ARABS BUT, AS HE HAD INDICATED, WE HAVEN'T RECEIVED ALL THE RETURNS. AS ISRAELIS KNEW, SYRIANS PREFERRED TO PROCEED MULTILATERALLY, BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT SADAT WON'T ACCEPT THIS. WE FRANKLY DON'T THINK THIS WOULD BE AN INSURMOUNTABLE DIFFICULTY.

9. THIRD POINT, SAID DINITZ, WAS QUESTION OF ROLE OF PLENARY. HE WISHED TO GO OVER ISRAEL'S ARGUMENTS AGAIN BECAUSE HE HAD FEELING THAT U.S. UNDERESTIMATED IMPORTANCE OF THIS POINT IN ISRAELI EYES. JUST BECAUSE WALDHEIM HAD GOTTEN UP AND MADE STATEMENT AT 1973 CONFERENCE DID NOT MEAN IT WAS PRECEDENT THAT EVERYONE HAD TO ACCEPT FOR 1977. HABIB SAID THAT SAYING WE WOULD PROCEED ON BASIS OF 1973 PROCEDURES WAS SIMPLY MOST CONVENIENT WAY WE COULD THINK OF TO SHORTEN ENDLESS WRANGLING ABOUT PROCEDURAL QUESTIONS. ISRAELIS' HOPE THAT THE PLENARY WOULD "WITHER AWAY"-- IN THE WORDS OF DAYAN -- WAS JUST NOT REALISTIC. IN ANY CASE, THE WAY NEGOTIATIONS PROCEED WOULD DEPEND ON CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE CONFERENCE, NOT ON ANY PROCEDURAL FINE PRINT WE TRY TO FORMULATE IN ADVANCE.

10. DINITZ SAID TWO THINGS DISTURBED ISRAEL ABOUT CONTINUING ROLE FOR PLENARY. ASIDE FROM MULTILATERAL GROUP WHICH WAS TO DISCUSS WEST BANK AND GAZA, PLENARY WOULD BE ONLY OTHER BODY AT CONFERENCE WHICH WOULD HAVE PALESTINIANS ON IT. THIS WOULD TEND TO GIVE PALESTINIANS THE SAME STATUS AS SOVEREIGN ARAB STATES. SECOND POINT WAS THAT PLENARY WOULD ACT AS RESTRICTING FORCE ON PROGRESS IN BILATERAL GROUPS. THIS WAS OBVIOUSLY WHY SYRIANS WANTED
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ROLE FOR PLENARY. DINITZ SAID ISRAEL "FOUGHT LIKE HELL" TO GET RID OF THE PROVISION THAT THE WORKING GROUPS WOULD REPORT TO THE PLENARY AND TO EMPHASIZE THAT PURPOSE OF BILATERAL GROUPS WAS TO "NEGOTIATE AND CONCLUDE" PEACE TREATIES. IN "OFF-THE-RECORD" COMMENT HE SAID THAT GIVING

PLENARY CONTINUING ROLE WOULD ALSO POSE SERIOUS INTERNAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS FOR BEGIN GOVERNMENT.

11. HABIB COMMENTED THAT ISRAEL HAD TO LOOK AT THIS IN REALISTIC TERMS. EGYPTIANS WERE SIMPLY NOT GOING TO ALLOW SYRIA POWER OF VETO OVER THEIR NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL. DINITZ REPLIED THIS WAS PROBABLY TRUE, BUT WHY MAKE EGYPTIAN FREEDOM OF ACTION ANY MORE DIFFICULT BY POOR AGREEMENT ON PROCEDURE? HABIB REPLIED THAT AGREEING THAT PLENARY HAD CONTINUING ROLE WAS GOING TO HAVE TO BE PRICE WE WOULD PAY FOR SYRIAN ATTENDANCE AT CONFERENCE. BUT, REALISTICALLY, WE DID NOT SEE THAT AGREEING TO SUCH PROCEDURE WOULD MEAN SYRIANS WOULD BE ABLE TO OBSTRUCT WORK OF BILATERAL GROUPS. DINITZ SAID ISRAEL HAD TO BE VERY CAREFUL THAT IT WAS NOT PLANTING TIME BOMB WHICH WOULD GO OFF DURING CONFERENCE. HABIB SAID WE UNDERSTOOD ISRAEL'S POSITION ON THIS, BUT FRANKLY DID NOT FIND IT PERSUASIVE.

12. REFERRING TO OVERALL STATE OF PLAY IN OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH ARABS, DINITZ SAID IT WOULD BE "DEVASTATING" TO U.S.-ISRAELI RELATIONS IF U.S. AND ARABS AGREED TO SOMETHING WHICH ISRAEL THEN FOUND IT COULDN'T ACCEPT. DINITZ SAID FLAVOR OF HABIB'S REMARKS SEEMED TO BE THAT ISRAEL SHOULD NOT BE VERY ARDENT IN ITS ATTACHMENT TO WHAT U.S. AND ISRAEL HAD AGREED UPON. HABIB SAID LET'S JUST SAY WE WOULD LIKE BOTH SIDES TO BE FLEXIBLE ENOUGH NOT TO LOSE SIGHT OF MAIN OBJECTIVE OF GETTING CONFERENCE RECONVENED.

13. MEETING CLOSED WITH WARNING BY DINITZ ABOUT SOVIETS.

HE ASKED THAT WE LOOK CLOSELY AT RECENT SOVIET ARABIC

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BROADCASTS TO MIDDLE EAST. SOVIETS WERE CASTIGATING U.S. IN MOST INTEMPERATE TERMS. ISRAELIS FELT STRONGLY ABOUT U.S.-SOVIET COOPERATION IN MIDDLE EAST. GOLDA MEIR HAD TOLD THE PRESIDENT THAT FOR HER IT WAS "SACRILEGE" EVEN FOR U.S. TO ALLOW SOVIETS TO JOIN IT IN STATEMENTS SEEKING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. HABIB REPLIED THAT ISRAEL KNEW OUR PHILOSOPHY ABOUT THE SOVIETS. WE HAD NO ILLUSIONS

ABOUT THEM BUT WE WERE DETERMINED TO TEST THEIR WILLINGNESS
TO TAKE CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE ON OUR CURRENT PROBLEM OF
GETTING TO GENEVA. HE SAID SECRETARY HAD TALKED WITH
DOBRYNIN AND WE WERE WAITING FOR SOVIET REPLY GIVING SOME
INDICATION OF THEIR ATTITUDE. WE WOULD ALSO WATCH THEIR
ACTIONS IN AREA VERY CAREFULLY. HABIB

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